

guidelines as stated in the program solicitation will be eliminated from competition and will be returned to the applicant.

(3) Proposals will be ranked based on evaluation criteria established in § 4285.70 of this subpart, and financial support levels will be recommended to the Assistant Administrator for Cooperative Services by the panel within the limitation of the total funding available in the fiscal year. The purpose of these evaluations is to provide information upon which the Assistant Administrator for Cooperative Services may make informed judgments in selecting proposals. Such recommendations are advisory only and are not binding on the awarding official of RDA or its successor agency. To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, all applications should be written with the care and thoroughness accorded papers for publication.

(b) *Disposition.* (1) On the basis of the Assistant Administrator for Cooperative Services's evaluation of an application in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section, the Assistant Administrator for Cooperative Services will either:

- (i) Approve support using currently available funds;
- (ii) Defer support due to lack of funds or need for further evaluation; or
- (iii) Disapprove support for the proposed project in whole or in part.

(2) With respect to any approved project, the Assistant Administrator for Cooperative Services will determine the project period during which the project may be funded.

(3) Any deferral or disapproval of an application will not preclude its reconsideration or reapplication during subsequent fiscal years. However, applicants must reapply if reconsideration is desired.

(4) The Assistant Administrator for Cooperative Services will not make a cooperative agreement funding award, based upon an application covered by this part, unless the application has been properly reviewed in accordance with the provisions of this part and unless said reviewers have made recommendations concerning the scientific merit and relevance to the program of such application.

§ 4285.70 Evaluation criteria.

(a) In evaluating the proposal, the RDA or its successor agency staff review panel and the awarding official will take into account the degree to which the proposal demonstrates the following:

(1) Focus on a practical solution to a significant problem involving one or more of the following on a cooperative business basis: the preparation for market, processing, packaging, handling, storing, transporting, distributing, or marketing of agricultural products. (35%)

(2) Adequacy, soundness, and appropriateness of the proposed approach to solve the identified problem. (30%)

(3) Feasibility and probability of success of project solving the problem. (10%)

(4) Qualifications, experience in related work, competence, and availability of project personnel to direct and carry out the project. (25%)

(b) In addition, the cost relative to the expected research results will be considered in determining the awarding of the agreements.

§§ 4285.71–4285.80 [Reserved]

§ 4285.81 Cooperative agreement awards.

(a) *General.* Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official shall make awards for cooperative agreements to those applicants whose proposals are judged most meritorious in the announced program areas under the evaluation criteria and procedures set forth in this part. The date specified by the Assistant Administrator for Cooperative Services as the beginning of the project period shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. All funds awarded under this part shall be expended solely in accordance with the methods identified in approved application and budget, the regulations of this part, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's "Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations" (part 3015 of this title) and the Department's "Uniform